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Colby Scolds Hill For Data Leaks

By Laurence Stern
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Every new covert program reported to Congress in 1975 leaked to the press, William E. Colby said yesterday in his swan song congressional testimony ending a tumultuous 24-month term as Central Intelligence Agency director.

Colby's final statement called for stronger legislative restraints to safeguard an increased flow of national security secrets to Capitol Hill.

He also charged that press and congressional investigations of the past year have consisted primarily "only of public repetition of the private reviews by the intelligence community of its own activities..."

"CIA's collation of a list of some questionable activities in the domestic field was used

as the basis for sensational charges of a massive illegal domestic intelligence system," Colby told the Senate Government Operations Committee.

Colby, who is expected to leave his post upon confirmation next week of George Bush as his successor, scolded committees of Congress for not keeping faith with commitments to the White House to withhold certain operations from public disclosure.

Although Colby described himself as a supporter of more effective congressional oversight of the CIA and other intelligence agencies, the cutting edge of his testimony was devoted to the need for stricter policing of intelligence secrets.

He pointed out that since new disclosure legislation was enacted at the end of 1974 the CIA has briefed eight congressional committees in "a timely manner" on all covert operation proposals.

"It was stressed and understood on all sides that these matters were sensitive, secret operations whose exposure would cause political damage to our foreign policy as well as frustration to the operations concerned.

"The result of the year's experience, in my mind, is clear. Every one of the new projects that were subjected to this process has leaked into the public domain." Covert operations in Angola, Italy and Iraq were leaked to the press.

Colby called for repeal of the disclosure provision and its replacement by a procedure that would ensure greater secrecy.

Original reports of CIA abuses in December, 1974, were based on what is now referred to as "the family jewels" — a compilation of irregularities gathered within the CIA at the direction of former Director James R. Schlesinger.

"In truth," said Colby, "our misdeeds were few and far between, as the final Rockefeller commission report reveals."

He said that "sweeping allegations that assassinations are part of our function" were made on the basis of the CIA's investigation into assassination schemes against foreign leaders.

"We never assassinated anyone," Colby declared. "And our own post mortems of our performance in various intelligence situations have been selectively exposed to give a totally erroneous impression of continued failures of American intelligence."

"In fact," he proclaimed, "we have the best intelligence service in the world. But we cannot keep it that way if every one of its corrective efforts is trumpeted to its enemies."

Questioned afterward by Sen. John Glenn (D-Ohio) on